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ABSTRACT

To address problems in public education for majority and minority ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe, Minority Rights Group International and the Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation organized a skills exchange workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 1997. Representatives from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovkia came together to address ways of making the education system responsive to the differing needs of minority and majority communities. This workshop report summarizes the key discussions and illustrates examples of good practice. An introductory section gives background information to the workshop and an overview of the discussions. The report's central section summarizes discussions and participants' views on the varied dimensions of multiculturalism in educational policy, concerns about imposing standard solutions to diverse situations, essential elements of successful educational policy and implementation, the legislative framework of educational policy and practice, centralization of education systems, the appropriateness of separate provisions for minority education, ongoing political issues in educational policy formation, issues and strategies for making education responsive to the varied needs of multi-ethnic societies, instructional materials, teacher training, the role of language in instruction, and special challenges for Roma education and for numerically small and geographically dispersed groups. A number of general suggestions for change are offered. A list of participants is included. (MSE)

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A Skills Exchange Workshop

WORKSHOP REPORT

ED 428 571

Background to the workshop

Public education is one of the most sensitive and important issues in minority-majority relations in Central and Eastern Europe. Schools are a primary site for the transmission of cultural knowledge and development of attitudes towards one's own and other groups, as well as towards civil society and public life in general. Historically, this sector has been used to promote dominant ideologies. Now it is frequently marked by competing claims over who will control the education system, and specific means for implementing education rights are contested in every country. These issues are often highly politicized and have, at times, become the spark for ethno-political conflict.

European and United Nations (UN) human and minority rights standards are explicit in their recognition of the importance of education rights. Nevertheless, there is wide room for variation in interpretation and implementation of standards. Furthermore, although education rights may be protected at the constitutional level, there are often delays in integrating domestic legislation, policy and practice in line with these principles. Variation is greater still in the local school and classroom.

There are a number of innovative approaches to address these problems, ranging from classroom teaching methods to restructuring the whole education system. These practices can become a source of inspiration for strategies to address persistent problems. To support the process of analysing the issues and sharing strategies, Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and the Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation organized a skills exchange workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 1997. The workshop brought together representatives of government ministries, minorities' organizations and educationalists from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to address ways of making the education system responsive to the differing needs of minority and majority communities.

The discussions ranged from issues related to the basic philosophies underpinning educational policies; to comparisons of the legal, political and administrative arrangements in each country; to discussion of teaching methodology and educational programmes. One reason why public education is so charged is due to the history of assimilation that has to some degree marked each country's education policies. Ideas about current and future arrangements are therefore viewed through this lens. The assumption underlying many governments' policies is that education should contribute towards 'national integration'. The implications of this in a multi-ethnic state can vary, depending on whether the government believes the state belongs to the dominant ethno-national group or is willing to acknowledge and value the diversity of groups that live together in one country. This Workshop Report summarizes the key discussions and illustrates examples of good practice.

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Visions of society: multiculturalism and interculturalism in educational policy

Participants recognized that the main challenge is how to create structures that both support the development of one's own group identity while fostering common ground between groups. This is addressed by the twin philosophies of multiculturalism and interculturalism. The common value in both is the recognition of the importance of cultural identity for social life, and for education in particular. This is different from educational strategies that confine the importance of ethno-cultural and religious identities to private life while reserving the public sphere for supposedly 'universal' cultural standards.

The group wrestled with trying to develop a common understanding of the differences between the two approaches. One workshop participant suggested that **interculturalism** implies an orientation towards interaction, communication and cross-fertilization among different identity groups. In education, this implies that pupils from different backgrounds are taught in the same classroom or system, and that they are able to learn about each other's, as well as their own culture and history. **Multiculturalism** on the other hand highlights pluralism and the need for separate 'spaces' within which groups can develop their own culture. In education, this implies the need for teaching in minorities' own languages, cultures and histories, potentially in separate environments.

One participant drew attention to three dimensions of this issue. The first is **demographic**, each country is ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse and this results in *de facto* multiculturalism. The second is **attitudinal** and reflects a multicultural approach to thinking about the diversity of one's own society. The third dimension is **structural** and relates to development of institutions that foster and support multiculturalism. In the educational sphere members of majority groups may not know about other groups or accept the idea of differences. This attitude can create a barrier to multiculturalism and interculturalism.

Another participant drew attention to the fact that Eastern Central European societies have been multicultural throughout their history with a tradition of peaceful cohabitation. Yet tensions between groups have arisen periodically for political reasons. This participant thought that education should seek to depoliticize culture and strengthen coexistence and cooperation. Another argued that this might only be possible if relations between different groups are based on equality, rather than one dictating the terms of cooperation.

These issues link directly to what became a very hot debate over the principles of segregation/autonomy/integration of minorities in the education system. Participants were divided in their opinions about separate, minority schools. Some feared that separate schools prevent everyday contact between children of different backgrounds, and were concerned that, without this contact, it would be easy for prejudices and negative stereotypes to develop. The underlying concern is that separate school systems create distances between the minority and the majority.

Others disagreed. One participant made a distinction between 'segregation' and 'autonomy'. According to her, segregation means forced separation; autonomy, voluntary separation. Several participants talked about the need for educational autonomy for minority groups that desire it in order to provide the foundations for self-development. This can then create the cultural basis for equality between members of different groups within the same country. This is necessary for true intercultural integration. They also countered the argument that minorities need to study in the majority language if they are to succeed: individuals rarely act against their own self-interests and should therefore be allowed to decide for themselves how to learn the majority language. Minorities rarely have difficulty learning about the majority culture because they experience it on a daily basis.

A number of participants expressed their concern about imposing standard solutions because situations vary greatly between different groups. Arrangements should, instead, be made to meet these needs based on dialogue between all the groups involved within the framework of internationally agreed education rights and standards. Another argued that governments should work with each group to design flexible systems to meet these needs.

The Dimcho Debelyanov Jewish School in Sofia

The Dimcho Debelyanov Jewish School in Sofia is open to all children – Jewish and non-Jewish – and combines the teaching of Hebrew and Jewish culture with subjects that are standard in all Bulgarian schools. Hebrew is an optional class but most pupils study it. Because there are no courses in Hebrew at Sofia University, it is difficult to find Hebrew teachers who meet the certification requirements set by the Ministry of Education. The school tends to rely instead on teachers who have been trained in Israel. Textbooks and other resources from Jewish foundations abroad are used to enrich the school's activities. The school forms a centre where Bulgarian and Jewish culture can intertwine, for the pupils and in the larger community, as is seen in their public charity concerts and the celebration or commemoration of key Bulgarian and Jewish events.

The discussion about educational philosophy also highlighted a number of additional points that should be included in educational arrangements:

- The need to work for positive change in the majority's attitude and knowledge of minority issues. In Poland participants pointed out that many ethnically Polish children are not aware that ethnic minorities exist in Poland because of the tradition of a 'one nation in Poland' philosophy.
- The significance of mutual respect between minority and majority cultures. This principle is especially helpful when acted on at an early stage. If a teacher shows interest in and respect for other cultures, this encourages an open attitude in children to other cultures.
- The importance of taking into account subtle elements of culture in the educational arrangements for members of different groups. Many Roma people, for example, share a perception of social space as open and fluid; if this cultural specificity is ignored, it can result in policies that stifle the cultural needs of Roma children.
- Recognition that the cultural basis of different groups can vary significantly and that there must be flexibility in respect to their educational needs. This is particularly true for religious education.
- Involving families and other community members in the education system can be an effective way to make links with different cultures. Families can be bearers of traditional knowledge within schools making the link between

community life and the education system. Their active involvement contrasts with the model of making the state education system solely responsible for this kind of cultural education.

The legislative framework of education policy and practice

Participants presented information on the education system in their country including arrangements for multicultural and intercultural education, and education in minorities' own languages. Several themes emerged which appear to be key issues in legislative and policy approaches to address diverse education needs: the degree of centralization in the education system; the degree of autonomy permitted for different groups; the use of resources from other countries for education of minority communities; and discrepancies between official policy and practice. These arrangements are formed within the context of the values and principles that shape the state's response to its different constituent groups, as well as assumptions about the role of central government.

Centralization of education systems

There is a wide variation between countries in the degree of centralization of control over education. The Slovak Ministry of Education exercises direct authority over schools and their financing. It appoints and can remove staff without consulting school boards. There are no formal procedures for parental participation or for informing them about school activities. Teachers must follow the national curriculum. Usually there is only one approved textbook for each subject. In Romania, the Ministry of Education controls the national curriculum, textbooks and other educational materials, appoints teachers, and finances local schools. Despite this formal control, participants cited frequent variations in how policies are applied in different regions of Romania and between different schools in the same area. In practice though there is often more *de facto* decentralization and independence in order to meet local needs than is provided in national legislation.

In Bulgaria, there is a national curriculum and the Ministry of Education determines basic school policies and administrative arrangements, and appoints head teachers. However, for the core subject areas, teachers can choose between several approved textbooks. Adherence to education policies is administered by regional offices with strong central control. Some participants argued that the prevailing education philosophy prevents the degree of autonomy needed to develop programmes that meet local needs, including the teaching of minority languages and cultures.

At the other end of the continuum is the new, decentralized education system that Hungary is phasing in. This system emerged out of harmonization of new legislation, including: public administration laws based on the subsidiarity principle (where decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level); national minority laws that grant recognition and aspects of self-governance to minority groups; and education laws that make local municipalities responsible for schools. The new education system and national curricula can be modified and implemented at the local community level to meet local needs, provided that national standards are maintained through negotiations between school and local government officials, parents, and representatives of local minorities' self-governments. The system is not based on an ethnic principle, *per se*, but can inherently reflect the ethnic composition of the community and allow its concerns to be articulated and addressed. Families will have direct input through participation in parent associations. There are concerns that this system is not yet working effectively and that it will take some time for participants to have the information and experience needed to participate fully.

Separate provisions for minority education

Each country has different arrangements to provide for the educational needs of children from minority communities. At one end of the continuum are provisions for separate schools for all levels of education which use the minority's language as the medium of instruction for most courses and have a curriculum that reflects the group's history and culture. At the other end of the continuum, the provisions for minority education are limited to optional classes in mainstream schools to provide opportunities for pupils to study their own language.

In Romania and Slovakia, there is a high degree of separation of the education of minorities from the education system as a whole, although these systems are under review. In Slovakia, there has traditionally been a range of provisions, especially at the primary level, for minority language instruction in either separate schools or optional classes – particularly for the Hungarian and Ukrainian communities. In 1995, the Slovak language law introduced regulations on the use of the Slovak language that reduced the use of minorities' languages in public, including in education. The government also introduced measures for 'alternative instruction' that promote bilingual instruction over minority languages as the medium of instruction. The government's intention appears to be to reduce the degree of separation between minorities' education and mainstream education in Slovakia.

In Romania, particularly in Transylvania, there was a tradition of schooling in minority languages. During the Ceausescu period a policy of assimilation was pursued. Since the changes in 1989 there has been an expansion of minority language education. While it remains obligatory to learn Romanian in school, it is also possible for children from minority groups to attend schools, or sections within schools, that use their own language as the medium of instruction and to sit examinations in the language in which the subjects are taught.

In Hungary, the decentralized structure can be utilized to adapt provisions for separate minorities' education and language of instruction, especially where the minority is geographically concentrated. In addition, the national core curriculum recognizes five main types of programmes for teaching minorities: bilingual education, instruction in the minority language, intercultural education programmes, Hungarian as the language of instruction with the minority language taught as a foreign language, and segregated 'catch-up'/remedial programmes for Roma children.

Poland adopted a new constitution in 1992 creating better conditions for the self-identification of minorities. This has resulted in changes to provisions for minorities' education. Decisions about the type of provisions offered to pupils from different ethnic communities are largely dependent on the group's size and concentration, as well as its history in Poland. However, because minorities must demand special provisions, usually only the best organized groups are able to secure their own schools or classes in their own language.

In Bulgaria, where provisions for minorities' are the most formally integrated within the mainstream education system, separate schools for some minority communities existed until the 1950s. This was followed by a period of gradual restriction on rights to minority education until the 1990s. In 1991, the Council of Ministers passed an ordinance that restored minority language education by allowing selected grades four optional classes per week. There are now four Islamic schools, which

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also provide secular education in Turkish. Nevertheless, most education for minorities is provided within mainstream schools that are centrally controlled. A number of participants expressed their concern about the lack of a clear philosophy and policy regarding multicultural and intercultural education in Bulgaria. It was believed that it would be difficult to deal with these challenges systematically throughout the education system unless the state makes a clear commitment to multicultural and intercultural education.

Education and politics: ongoing concerns

Despite the variety of arrangements for minority education between countries, there is a marked similarity in the issues that are problematic. It appears that current education policies are the result of changing historical and ideological trends in each country. In some countries, minority groups have experienced shifts from harsh assimilation policies to the recognition and promotion of minorities' distinct cultural needs in education over the last 50 years. This inconsistency has left minority education activists feeling insecure. Their concerns stem from the fear that recent gains may just as easily be taken away or that current attempts to reduce existing provisions are an indication of an attempt to pursue assimilation policies.

One participant presented a general framework for understanding the forces that are responsible for changes in the contemporary education systems. First, is the ability of minority groups to organize themselves and to articulate and represent their aspirations effectively. Second, is the degree of political interest and motivation within the mainstream political system to permit positive changes in education policies. Third, is the amount of external pressure on the country to make changes. Fourth, is the effectiveness of the regulatory framework for the existing system and the degree to which it provides for the needs of pupils from different backgrounds. This framework indicates that educational arrangements in a given country are based on many factors other then the direct needs of pupils. Instead, educational arrangements are fundamentally political at this point in the region's history.

Participants also expressed their concern about discrepancies between policy and practice in their country. Several participants pointed out that while education rights for minorities may be formally recognized, little is done to ensure that there are sufficient resources to fulfil these rights. Participants were divided in their opinions over whether the lack of resources is primarily a financial issue (i.e. subject to same funding problems found in other areas of public life) or a political issue (i.e. a tacit failure of political will to provide sufficient resources to implement minorities' education rights). Most recognized that both aspects are probably at work. Either way, the pattern of discrepancy between rights and realities can hinder confidence-building and risks creating an environment in which members of minority groups perceive themselves to be treated as 'second-class citizens'.

Issues and strategies for making education responsive

Throughout the workshop, several practical issues were repeatedly highlighted as critical to addressing the different educational needs of multi-ethnic societies. Key issues included such diverse problems as addressing the different needs of specific groups, obtaining appropriate textbooks and other curricular materials, the principles used when setting up special classes or schools for minority pupils, and teacher training.

Principles for setting up minorities' schools or classes

Each country has policies guiding the requirements for forming minority language education. The criteria are often based on the request of a specified number of families or pupils. For example, in Bulgaria, a minimum of 13 students is necessary for a teacher to be appointed for language classes. Participants pointed out that this policy presents many hidden barriers to pupils receiving instruction in their first language. These problems are particularly acute when the minority is geographically dispersed and there are no additional resources for transport to a central location or for distance learning. Sometimes arrangements are different according to the age group. In Romania, for example, children who speak a minority language learn Romanian language and literature using special education programmes at the primary level and then follow the same curriculum and use the same books as Romanian-speakers at the secondary level.

Another participant pointed to the dilemma created when optional minority language classes are scheduled at the same time as classes in foreign languages. Pupils must make a choice between learning their own language and learning a language that could give them greater access to the international community. This choice could lead to deculturation on the one hand, or isolation and limited opportunities on the other. In Bulgaria, these barriers have resulted in only small numbers of pupils taking advantage of education in their first language. Minorities in other countries experience similar problems, although some groups have developed strategies to rectify the situation.

Ukrainian education in Poland: dealing with dispersal

In 1947, Ukrainians in Poland were subject to mass expulsions from their home territories in south-eastern Poland and were dispersed in an attempt to assimilate them into Polish society. The consequence has been the logistical difficulty of maintaining the cultural and educational traditions of the community. They have now developed a system that partly addresses this problem. Pupils can study Ukrainian from *kindergarten* through to university. In areas where they are concentrated, there are Ukrainian primary and secondary schools. Where the community is dispersed other arrangements are made. At primary level, if there is a minimum of three pupils, special 'study stations' are set up in Polish-language schools. At secondary level, pupils can continue using these study stations in their community or become a boarder at one of the Ukrainian schools. Graduates from Ukrainian schools can take examinations and continue their education in the Ukrainian departments of several different institutes and universities. The system does have its problems, many of them due to financial limitations. These affect the availability of up-to-date Ukrainian-language textbooks and subsidies for lodging residential students. Nevertheless these schools can create the basis for positive coexistence by maintaining a strong cultural coherence while permitting opportunities for children from Polish and Ukrainian communities to get to know each other.

Textbooks and curriculum materials

Obtaining appropriate textbooks for minorities' education seemed to be a problem in most countries and for most

groups. The main issues centre on the language or the content of the materials. While many minority groups have achieved the right to some form of education in their own language, their efforts are often hindered by a lack of approved textbooks. Some classes are forced to rely on textbooks that are significantly out of date. In some cases, classes have been able to use textbooks from countries where their language is the main state language. Elsewhere this solution has not been available because the government requires that all texts be approved by the Ministry of Education. Even if textbooks are approved, it is no guarantee that they will be used. For example, in Slovakia, an organization prepared textbooks in Romani and these were approved by the Ministry of Education. However, the books did not reach the schools and have apparently been held in storage at the Ministry for several years.

Another problem is the content of official textbooks. A common difficulty is the portrayal of minority groups, particularly in history and geography subjects. This difficulty is, in turn, linked to that of ensuring that there are sufficient curricular materials for pupils from minority communities to learn about their own group's history and culture. One participant gave an example from Bulgaria, where history textbooks have very little information about minority groups and give a distorted interpretation of the widely acknowledged assimilation policies pursued in the late 1980s. Interestingly though, Bulgaria schedules time for teachers to conduct lessons on issues deemed important to pupils in their school and this has created a space for the use of supplementary texts. Another participant gave an example from Romania, where a recent education ordinance mandated that lessons in the history and geography of minorities be included in textbooks. This is a positive step, but so far appropriate textbooks have not been made available and there is little sign that they will be prepared soon.

Intercultural teaching materials in Bulgaria: Roma literature, art and culture

The Inter-Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, with support from MRG, developed supplementary curriculum materials as a part of a pilot project for introducing intercultural education into the formal education system in Bulgaria. Roma and non-Roma worked together to design the project, as well as to collect authentic material about the history and culture of Roma. Their efforts resulted in a set of materials that can be used with mainstream curriculum subjects, such as history, literature and music. The emphasis is on the equality of all cultures and ethnic groups; a message directed principally to non-Roma children who are often burdened with the prejudices of adults. At first, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education was suspicious of a non-governmental organization (NGO) developing teaching materials. With the political changes of 1996–7, however, the Ministry welcomed this initiative and approved the materials for inclusion in the national curriculum. They are currently used in 35 schools. Several Roma educationalists expressed their approval of the materials but were concerned that without proper intercultural training, teachers might not be able to use them appropriately. This is now the challenge that the project seeks to address.

One participant expressed her concern that there is a contradiction in the curriculum materials of many education systems. Older materials are often filled with images of the ancestors of minority groups that incite negative stereotypes; this in turn leads to tension and communication barriers between students. She pointed out that education ministries must avoid the contradiction of approving intercultural and multicultural textbooks on the one hand, while continuing to encourage the use of texts that promote hatred and mistrust on the other. Another participant pointed to the need for textbooks that contextualize all the groups within a society. He proposed the introduction of intercultural textbooks that present the different histories and cultures that coexist in each country. A more detailed study could be prepared as a teacher resource. Textbooks for the first to fourth grades should be designed to promote curiosity about other cultures, whereas books for older pupils could be designed to stimulate dialogue and a common understanding of the issues. Other participants agreed and stressed the importance of members of minority communities being directly involved in the development of textbooks on these topics, so that the perspective of their community is represented.

Teacher training

Appropriate teacher training is a core need to ensure the development of multicultural and intercultural education. Two main areas need to be addressed: first, ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of trained teachers for education in minority languages; second, that teachers should promote a positive environment for intercultural education in their classrooms. Some communities experience difficulties obtaining enough teachers for minority language education. One problem all countries have is that because minority language teachers are employed part-time only, it can be difficult to recruit professional teachers who need to work full-time. Sometimes, however, the problem results from the long-term consequence of past assimilation policies or the legacy of discrimination. One participant pointed to the example of Germans in Poland. For decades, this community faced severe penalties if caught speaking German in public or in private. Therefore many families did not risk teaching their children German. While the community is now allowed to use its language freely, there is a lack of people who know the language well enough to teach it. Roma communities in many countries experience similar difficulties. This problem is compounded by the difficulty of a disproportionately small number of qualified teachers as the result of discrimination within education systems that do not encourage Roma graduates. In some cases these problems are being addressed with the development of minorities language departments at universities. This does not, however, tackle the problems experienced by communities that have few members who enroll in university.

Teleki Education Centre, Romania

The Teleki Education Centre in Soveta, Romania was founded in 1994 as the only non-governmental centre in Romania for training teachers involved in Hungarian education. It organizes summer workshops where teachers can improve their specialist skills. Courses range from English language classes, to innovative teaching methodologies for civic education, to advanced science subjects. Over 1,000 teachers participate each year, drawn from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Ukraine. It also serves as a cultural centre, hosting artistic events and intercultural youth programmes.

Other participants spoke of the problem of teachers who are prejudiced and unwilling to create an environment where pupils of

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different backgrounds are treated with equal respect. Less extreme are cases where teachers are unaware of minorities' cultures and histories and so cannot teach about these issues. A number of NGOs in the region have tried to address these problems through intercultural teacher training programmes. While some of these programmes have been successful in changing the attitudes and practices of teachers who participated, only a fraction of teachers have been reached and some would not enrol on a voluntary basis. The workshop participants suggest that intercultural education should be a compulsory part of teacher training and be a core responsibility of the Ministries of Education.

Challenges for Roma education

From participants' discussions, a picture emerged about the dilemmas facing Roma in the education system. One participant gave an example from Poland where, instead of offering preparation classes in Polish to enable a transition to mainstream classrooms, the Ministry of Education insists on Roma pupils attending segregated classes between the first and eighth grades. He argued that the quality of education in these segregated classes is inferior and results in a 'ghettoization' of Roma in the education system. In each country, Roma children are placed in schools for children with learning difficulties in disproportionately high numbers. Often this is solely because Roma children start school speaking only Romani but are expected to learn in the language of the majority group without the benefit of support from a teacher who understands their language. They therefore start with a learning disadvantage which is compounded if they experience social discrimination and prejudice. As in Poland, most countries make special classes or schools for Roma only. Participants agreed that these arrangements are usually under-resourced and that the education is often inferior. Very few students subsequently go on to university. Participants also said that Roma pupils are often not given access to an academic, secondary education but are directed exclusively into vocational training programmes.

A number of Roma participants emphasized that their aspiration is for Roma children to be fully integrated within mainstream schools, with access to the full range of educational options. This may be a controversial issue in the broader Roma community, which is highly diverse. One participant, however, summed up a common viewpoint that the Roma have suffered violence throughout their history and particularly during the Holocaust, yet they have survived. Now the challenge is for Roma to have full access so that they can become equal partners in society. At the same time, it is important for children to be able to study Romani languages and learn about their history and cultures. One participant described his experience of growing up as 'an assimilated Roma', left with only fragments of knowledge about his culture and ashamed of his community. He and other participants believe that learning their own language in school is vitally important to overcome the shame that forces many Roma to shy away from using it and therefore feeling discomfort with their roots. Many recommended the reinstatement of pre-school *kindergartens* to prepare Roma children for mainstream schools. Others added that there is a need to be innovative with Roma education programmes throughout the different school levels.

Teaching Romani: an innovative programme in Bulgaria

In the 1990s, minorities were given the right to study their own languages in Bulgaria – but no support or materials were provided to make such teaching a reality. At one school with a high percentage of Roma pupils, a teacher decided to develop a programme to address this need. Lilyan Kovatcheva found that many Roma families were at first suspicious of the idea of their child studying Romani in school, afraid that this might lead to a 'ghettoization'. Slowly she was able to bring together a group of 20 children to form a class. It was particularly important to develop the students' writing and reading skills, but as they had no textbooks she had to develop teaching materials herself. The first year was a success and the next year there were enough pupils enrolled to form four classes. In cooperation with the Intercultural Dialogue Programme at Sofia University, she expanded the programme to develop and test methods of teaching cultural issues and literature within mixed groups of Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish pupils. These classes have also been successful. Her general conclusion is that 'children are born without prejudices' and therefore it is valuable for children to come together in a context in which they can learn to know each other as people and as members of different cultures.

Challenges for numerically small and geographically dispersed groups

Groups that are numerically small or whose members are geographically dispersed face quite different challenges when it comes to meeting their community's educational needs. Concerns are linked to the twin dangers of 'deculturation' and assimilation on the one hand, and isolation from the broader society on the other. Different groups develop different strategies for dealing with these dilemmas. One of the main problems in education arises from the problems of creating the material infrastructure for specific educational provisions within the mainstream schools, as it may be thought that the populations are too small to justify the resource allocations. Several participants gave examples of how their community dealt with this problem. A traditional option for many communities has been to provide extracurricular education through religious or community centres. A potentially innovative solution is being tried in Poland, where education officials are planning to organize summer camps so that minority students can study their first language. Another option is some form of distance learning or residential programmes.

Suggestions for change

While participants made suggestions for addressing problems throughout the workshop, the last session concentrated on brainstorming recommendations. These suggestions were discussed, but no attempt was made to seek the group's collective agreement. They should therefore be taken as ideas stemming from issues raised earlier, rather than as a consensus of the participants' views. Clearly some of these are resource-dependent; and all will need the political will to make a basic commitment to ensure their realization.

- Systematic research is needed to identify the best methodologies and policies for addressing minorities' educational needs.
- Educational systems could be decentralized so that the diverse needs of local communities can be incorporated in schools so long as a core of national standards are maintained.
- Basic institutional change is needed in order to incorporate a philosophy of multiculturalism and interculturalism.

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These values should pervade all aspects of school activity, and not only consist of a booklet with guidelines. Training for teachers, administrators and support staff is needed so that they understand and incorporate these values.

- Ministries of Education need funding to develop and disseminate intercultural and minorities' languages textbooks and teaching aids; NGOs should not be expected to fill this basic function on their own.
- Intercultural education should be a part of the state education strategy and should include education about human and minority rights.
- There should be regular self-evaluation within schools in order to identify and address areas of 'hidden discrimination' such as when school staff permit racist taunts; NGOs may have a role to play here.
- Minorities' organizations, parents and communities should be enabled to participate in formulating education philosophy on instruction in minority languages, and on multicultural and intercultural education arrangements.

List of participants

Bulgaria

Tanya Borisova	Teacher Training Institute, Stara Zagora
Kalina Bozeva	Chair, Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, Sofia
Denislava Dechev	Lecturer in Philosophy, Haskova
Ivan Dimitrov	Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Sofia
Mihail Ivanov	Foundation International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, Sofia
Lilyan Kovatcheva	Romani language teacher, Tran Vazor
Plamen Makariev	Associate Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sofia
Lyutvi Mestan	Chair, Parliamentary Commission on Education
Yosif Nunev	Director, Romani School, Rakitovo
Nevena Pavlova	Teacher, Rakitovo
Edward Selyan	Armenian language expert, St Kliment Ohridsky University, Sofia
Lili Melamed Tokadgieva	Hebrew teacher, Sofia
Vartanush Tokbashian	Chief Editor, *Erevan* newspaper
Ilona Tomova	Education Programme Coordinator, Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, Sofia
Dafinka Toucheva	Teacher, Rakitovo
Milena Vaseva	Associate Professor, University of Sofia
Virginia Vulova	Executive Director, Open Education Centre

Hungary

Bela Csillei	'Romany Chance', Alternative Vocational School, Szolnok
Gabor Frank	Head teacher, Germany Minority School, Pecs
Szvetla Kjoszeva	Teacher, Bulgarian-Hungarian School, Budapest
Péter Radó	Special Adviser, Education Programme Support Unit, Open Society Institute, Budapest

Poland

Piotr Bajda	Department for National Minorities, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Warsaw
Danuta Berlinska	Silesian Research Institute, Opole; former Plenipotentiary of the Head of Regional Public Administration for National Minorities
Eugeniuz Mironowicz	Editor in Chief, *Niwa*, Bialystok
Miron Sycz	Executive Director, Ukrainian Secondary School, Gorowo-Illowiecke, Kosciuszki

Romania

Istvan Biro	Secretary General, Hungarian Teachers Association of Romania, Sovata
Andrea Bucurenciu	Teacher, 'Honterus' German School, Brasov
Vasile Burtea	Head of the National Office for Roma, Department for Protection of Minorities, Liet University, Bucharest
Istvan Haller	Head, Human Rights Department, Liga Pro Europa, Tigu-Muires
Christina McDonald (Observer)	Programme Coordinator, Open Society Institute, Education Programme Support Unit, Budapest
Ellena Sima	Inspector, Ministry of Education, Bucharest

Slovakia

Alajos Csicsay	Chair, Association 'Katedra', Dunajska Streda
Ágnesá Héder	Member of Association 'Katedra', Dunajska Streda
Zuzana Kumanova	Programme Coordinator, INFOROMA Foundation, Bratislava
Juliana Nagyova	Foundation for Roma Children – Centre of Education, Presov
Viliam Zeman	Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and the Family

Catherine Barnes	Programme Coordinator, Europe/FSU/Americas, MRG International, London

Anna-Mariá Biró	Project Manager, Central and Eastern Europe Initiative, MRG Budapest
Mark Bossanyi	Member of Board of Directors, Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, Sofia
Louise Douglas	Education Programme Coordinator, MRG International, London
Martin Emerson	Coordinator, Roma Intrinsic and Passport Programmes, MRG International, London
Rado Gueotchiev	Project Coordinator, Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, Sofia
Monika Raffael	Project Manager, Roma Intrinsic and Passport Programmes, MRG Coordination Office, Budapest
Ilona Tomova	Member, Board of Directors, Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights, Sofia.

MELANIE FRIEND/PANOS PICTURES

Plovdiv, Bulgaria (school with mostly Roma/Turkish-speaking pupils)

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The views expressed in this Workshop Report represent a summary of the views of the individual participants and do not necessarily reflect those of MRG International or the Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation.

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Minority Rights Group International

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization working to secure rights for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.

We publish readable, concise and accurate Reports on the issues facing oppressed groups around the world. We also produce books, education and training materials, and MRG's 800-page *World Directory of Minorities*.

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Minority Rights Group International
379 Brixton Road
London SW9 7DE
UK

Tel: +44 (0)171 978 9498
Fax: +44(0)171 738 6265
E-mail: minority.rights@mrg.sprint.com
Web site: www.minorityrights.org

***Cover photo (left):** Class in Romania, including Roma schoolchildren.*
***(Right):** Young boy at a school in Bulgaria with mostly Roma/Turkish-speaking pupils.*

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